

If local law enforcement is given the proper resources, information, and intelligence, they will know how to properly handle terrorism threats.

H.R. 2169 will strengthen our economy while keeping our fellow citizens safe.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in supporting H.R. 2169 because the safety of citizens from potential threats is critical to the security of the homeland and strength of our economy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2169, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

BORDER ENFORCEMENT SECURITY TASK FORCE REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2281) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to reauthorize the Border Enforcement Security Task Force program within the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2281

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Border Enforcement Security Task Force Reauthorization Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. MODIFIED INSTRUCTIONS.

(a) UPDATED CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNITS.—Paragraph (2) of section 432(c) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 240(c)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “the Secretary shall consider” and inserting “the Secretary shall apply risk-based criteria that takes into consideration”; and

(2) in subparagraph (A), by inserting before the semicolon the following: “, including threats posed by transnational criminal organizations”;

(3) in subparagraph (C), by striking “and” after the semicolon;

(4) in subparagraph (D), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(5) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

“(E) the extent to which the BEST unit would advance the Department’s homeland and border security strategic priorities and related objectives; and

“(F) whether departmental Joint Task Force operations as established pursuant to section 708 and other joint cross-border initiatives would be enhanced, improved, or otherwise assisted by the BEST unit to be established.”.

(b) PORT SECURITY.—Subsection (c) of section 432 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 240) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(4) PORT SECURITY BEST UNITS.—A BEST unit established pursuant to paragraph (2)

with a port security nexus shall be composed of at least one member of each of the following:

“(A) The Coast Guard Investigative Service.

“(B) The geographically-responsible Coast Guard Sector Intelligence Office.”.

(c) UPDATED REPORT ELEMENTS.—Subsection (e) of section 432 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 240) is amended to read as follows:

“(e) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this section and annually thereafter for the following five years, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that includes the following:

“(1) A description of the effectiveness of BEST in enhancing border security, disrupting and dismantling transnational criminal organizations, and reducing drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal alien trafficking and smuggling, violence, and kidnapping along and across the international borders of the United States, as measured by crime statistics, including violent deaths, incidents of violence, and drug-related arrests.

“(2) An assessment of how BEST enhances information-sharing, including the dissemination of homeland security information, among Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement agencies.

“(3) A description of how BEST advances the Department’s homeland and border security strategic priorities and effectiveness of BEST in achieving related objectives.

“(4) An assessment of BEST’s joint operational efforts with departmental Joint Task Force operations established pursuant to section 708 and other joint cross-border initiatives.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VELA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 2281, the Border Enforcement Security Task Force Reauthorization Act of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, we are living in unprecedented times. A quick glance of recent headlines shows that our Nation is suffering from the largest heroin epidemic in the history of the United States. In fact, just last week, Bloomberg Businessweek reported that heroin has become so pervasive in our cities and so profitable for the cartels that supply it that even our local law enforcement officers are disheartened and admit that sporadic street-level arrests seem to have little to no effect.

Recently, in my district and because of the hard work of our men and women in law enforcement, we witnessed the dismantling of a large-scale organization. News reports indicate 52

individuals are facing charges for about 370 crimes, including operating as drug dealers and traffickers.

Mr. Speaker, if these individuals had not been stopped, their nefarious activities would have broken the dreams of children across America, and their criminal enterprise would have caused millions in economic loss through increased incarceration, rehab, and medical expenses. If they had not been stopped, their actions would have continued to introduce poison into our communities and shattered lives.

Even worse, a recent trend shows that the heroin hitting our streets is becoming more lethal as drug cartels have now begun lacing heroin with fentanyl, a synthetic opioid making doses more addictive and cheaper to produce.

I might add parenthetically that, for 20 years as a Federal prosecutor, I prosecuted every possible drug organization known to man. I have never seen anything with the lethality that is heroin.

This epidemic is, in large part, due to the stream of illegal narcotics that is flowing across our Nation’s borders. However, there are steps that can be taken to shut down these illicit pathways. Thankfully, there is a Federal task force dedicated to this singular purpose.

In 2005, in response to the increase in violence along the southwest border of Mexico, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, in partnership with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as well as other Federal, State, local, and international law enforcement officials, created what is known as BEST, the Border Enforcement Security Task Force.

To date, a total of 44 BEST units have been deployed across 16 States and in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. My home State of New York is well served by three BEST teams, two of which are situated on the northern border and one of which I helped stand up in Massena, New York.

Nationwide, BEST teams comprise over 1,000 members who represent over 100 law enforcement agencies that have committed to jointly investigate transnational criminal activity along the southwest and northern borders and at our Nation’s major seaports.

Since inception, their collective efforts have initiated more than 10,654 investigations which have resulted in almost 13,000 criminal arrests, the seizure of 1.2 million pounds of narcotics, and more than \$130 million. The street value of 1.2 million pounds of narcotics is astronomical.

This is an impressive feat by any measure; however, as we are considering reauthorizing this important task force, it is important to highlight where there is some room for improvement. Every Congress looks at existing programs and makes adjustments when needed. That is exactly what we are proposing to do here today.

Of the 44, total, BEST units, 20 of them are designated by Homeland Security Investigations as having a maritime security focus. While the Coast Guard provides critical support to Federal, State, and local partners through a majority of the maritime BESTs, not every maritime BEST is currently benefiting from Coast Guard participation.

This bill mandates the participation of both a Coast Guard Investigative Service special agent and a uniformed Coast Guard intelligence officer on every maritime BEST. By utilizing both plainclothes investigators and uniformed intelligence officers, BEST will be able to partner with the Coast Guard in ongoing criminal investigations and the generation of actionable maritime intelligence.

The Coast Guard is the only agency within DHS that is also an independent member of the intelligence community. This unique position, coupled with the fact that the Coast Guard has unparalleled maritime domain awareness through daily interaction with mariners and facility operators, makes it imperative that they are included in all maritime BESTS in a mandatory fashion.

As we find ourselves halfway through Police Week this week, I want to take a second to pause and thank the men and women of law enforcement throughout this great Nation—many of whom I have stood side by side with for over 20 years—for all they do in keeping our country safe.

I would also like to thank the ranking member, Mr. VELA, for introducing this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support the law enforcement community and vote in favor of reauthorizing this important task force.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE,

Washington, DC, May 15, 2017.

Hon. MICHAEL T. MCCAUL,
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN MCCAUL: I write concerning H.R. 2281, the Border Enforcement Security Task Force Reauthorization Act of 2017. This legislation includes matters that I believe fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

In order to expedite floor consideration of H.R. 2281, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure agrees to forgo action on this bill. However, this is conditional on our mutual understanding that forgoing consideration of the bill would not prejudice the Committee with respect to the appointment of conferees or to any future jurisdictional claim over the subject matters contained in the bill or similar legislation that fall within the Committee's Rule X jurisdiction. I request you urge the Speaker to name members of the Committee to any conference committee named to consider such provisions.

Please place a copy of this letter and your response acknowledging our jurisdictional interest into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD dur-

ing consideration of the measure on the House floor.

Sincerely,

BILL SHUSTER,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC, May 15, 2017.

Hon. BILL SHUSTER,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SHUSTER: Thank you for your letter regarding H R 2281, the "Border Enforcement Security Task Force Reauthorization Act of 2017". I appreciate your support in bringing this legislation before the House of Representatives. I understand that the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, will not seek a sequential referral on the bill. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

The Committee on Homeland Security concurs with the mutual understanding that the decision not to seek a sequential referral on this bill at this time does not prejudice any claim the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure may have on this legislation or similar legislation in the future.

I will insert copies of this exchange in the Congressional Record during consideration of this bill on the House floor. I thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL T. MCCAUL,
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security.

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2281, the Border Enforcement Security Task Force Reauthorization Act of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, H.R. 2281, seeks to reauthorize the Border Enforcement Security Task Force, or BEST, program within the Department of Homeland Security.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement leads 42 BEST units across 16 States within the United States and Puerto Rico. Each unit is comprised of members from ICE's Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as well as other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies who investigate criminal activity along the southwest and northern borders and at the Nation's major seaports.

These units play a critical role in advancing DHS' border security efforts by ensuring all levels of domestic law enforcement are sharing information and leveraging resources. BEST units have been instrumental in coordinating joint operations with our law enforcement partners in Mexico to thwart threats posed by transnational criminal organizations.

This legislation is in furtherance of my efforts as ranking member of the Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security to bolster law enforcement collaboration on cross-border threats and to ensure that resources are used in a strategic manner to effectively mitigate such threats, particularly in response to the drug cartels.

Those of us representing border districts are well aware that cartels adapt quickly to exploit real or perceived weaknesses in our security. As they

shift their criminal operations to new locations along our land borders, smuggle their contraband into the United States through our ports of entry, or utilize maritime routes into this country, DHS must be at the ready to quickly intercept and disrupt their operations.

This legislation seeks to ensure that DHS continues to use BEST units to maximum effect. This bill instructs DHS, before standing up a BEST unit, to consider the cross-border threats posed by transnational criminal organizations, the Department's homeland and border security strategic priorities, as well as the operations of DHS' joint task forces and other multi-agency efforts.

H.R. 2281 also updates existing reporting requirements so that Congress has better information on how effectively BEST units are reducing criminal activity, such as the traffic of drugs, weapons, and people along our borders; enhancing information sharing among law enforcement partners; coordinating with the Department's joint task forces; and generally advancing the DHS homeland security and border security strategic priorities.

I also want to thank my colleagues on the Border and Maritime Security Subcommittee who have cosponsored this legislation, including Subcommittee Chairwoman MARTHA MCSALLY. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2281.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2281, the Border Enforcement Security Task Force Reauthorization Act of 2017, is a commonsense, bipartisan bill that seeks to maximize the effectiveness of the successful border security program and ensure that, going forward, the program continues to contribute to making our Nation more safe and secure.

H.R. 2281 was approved by voice vote by the full committee on May 3 and enjoys broad, bipartisan support.

Before I yield back, I would like to thank Chairman MCCAUL and Ranking Member THOMPSON, as well as Subcommittee Chairwoman MCSALLY, for their work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I once again urge my colleagues to adopt this legislation.

I want to note that, back in the mid-nineties when I was starting out my career as a Federal organized crime prosecutor, I was set on the border in El Paso, Texas, and I had a frontline view, as I was going after cartel-level drug traffickers back then, of just what a problem the border is.

Many people think of the border's primary problem being illegal aliens, but I can tell you firsthand—and I think my colleague from Texas will agree with me—that drug trafficking remains a gigantic issue, and the poison that is killing our kids is streaming across the southwest border in particular.

It is imperative that bills like this continue. It is imperative that Congressman VELA, Congresswoman MCSALLY, and the others on their subcommittee continue their great work identifying issues along the border, both north and south, and that the BEST concept continues and, indeed, hopefully, expands in the future. Targeted law enforcement that involves people on both sides of the border and law enforcement is the only way we are ever going to solve this problem. I commend them for their work on this.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2281 the "Border Enforcement Security Task Force Reauthorization Act of 2017."

As a Senior Member on the House Committee on Homeland Security; and former Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security, I know well the importance of protecting our nation's borders.

I thank my colleague Congressman VELA for sponsoring this bipartisan legislation, which reauthorizes the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) program.

An escalation in drug trafficking and transnational criminal activity along our nation's southern border has led to record levels of violence and drug trafficking-related homicides.

Despite significant efforts to combat the drug trade, many governments in the region suffer from overwhelmed criminal justice systems and law enforcement agencies.

There must be a multi-pronged approach to solving the drug crisis in the United States, it must include treatment upon demand; education; increase resources for border interdiction and seizure of illicit drugs and advanced technology to detect and track those who may be engaged in illegal activity along the border.

The Border Enforcement Security Task Force is accomplishing the important law enforcement component of border security.

The Border Enforcement Security Task Force achieves its goal of border security enhancement by facilitating collaboration among federal, state, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement agencies to execute coordinated activities in furtherance of border security and homeland security; and enhancing information-sharing, including the dissemination of homeland security information among such agencies.

The BEST program is currently administered by DHS, and involves information sharing and law-enforcement operations between personnel from federal, state, local, tribal, and foreign law-enforcement agencies to combat criminal activity near the United States borders.

This program has established teams of law enforcement agents from over 100 law enforcement agencies that form units to investigate transnational criminal activity.

This approach supports better cooperation and collaboration among federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies when investigating criminal activity along the southwest and northern borders, as well as at the nation's major seaports.

Since their inception, BEST Units have collectively initiated more than 10,654 cases.

These actions have resulted in more than:

2,718 criminal arrests
7,245 administrative arrests
110,711 pounds of cocaine
5,517 pounds of ecstasy
1,764 pounds of heroin
1,036,749 pounds of marijuana
6,325 pounds of methamphetamine
2,988,561 rounds of ammunition
4,657 vehicles
\$130.2 million in U.S. currency
15,062 weapons

This bill instructs the Secretary of Homeland Security to also consider:

The cross-border threats posed by transnational criminal organizations;

The Department's homeland and border security strategic priorities; and

The departmental Joint Task Forces and other multi-agency cross-border operations when establishing new BEST Units.

In addition, this bill would update the Secretary's existing reporting requirement to provide an assessment of how BEST Units enhance information-sharing among law enforcement partners, coordinate with Departmental Joint Task Forces, and advance the Department's homeland and border security strategic priorities.

This legislation will improve and update the information sharing practices between our law enforcement agencies so they will operate in a cohesive manner.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2281 the BEST program because it had proven throughout the years to improve our border security, along with improving how our law enforcement agencies operate and share vital information.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2281, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1600

REMOVING OUTDATED RESTRICTIONS TO ALLOW FOR JOB GROWTH ACT

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1177) to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to release on behalf of the United States the condition that certain lands conveyed to the City of Old Town, Maine, be used for a municipal airport, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1177

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Removing Outdated Restrictions to Allow for Job Growth Act".

SEC. 2. RELEASE OF REVERSIONARY INTEREST.

(a) RELEASE.—Notwithstanding section 32(c) of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant

Act (7 U.S.C. 1011(c)), if the City of Old Town, Maine, makes a written request to the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary shall release, convey, and quitclaim, without monetary consideration, all rights, title, and interest of the United States in and to the lands specified in subsection (b).

(b) LANDS SPECIFIED.—The lands subject to subsection (a) include only the lands—

(1) conveyed by the United States to the City of Old Town, Maine, under section 32(c) of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (7 U.S.C. 1011(c)) by the deed dated June 5, 1941;

(2) proposed for conveyance by the City of Old Town, Maine, for the purpose of economic development; and

(3) described in the written request submitted by the City of Old Town, Maine, to the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1177, Removing Outdated Restrictions to Allow for Job Growth Act.

In the early 1980s, the city of Old Town, Maine, purchased land from the Federal Government to be part of the Old Town airport. The deed included a use restriction, as required by a 1941 amendment to the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937, limiting use of the land to a municipal airport or other public use.

Old Town has invested heavily in this land in order to attract businesses, but the outdated deed restriction needs to be lifted before further economic development can occur.

H.R. 1177 provides for the removal of the deed restriction on the parcel of land around the Old Town airport to allow for business development. The bill allows the City of Old Town to send a letter to the Secretary of Agriculture detailing which lands it would like released from the deed restriction and directs the Secretary to release that land to the city of Old Town.

Passage of this commonsense provision will allow economic development in Old Town to move forward, creating as many as 200 much-needed jobs. This legislation will provide certainty to private investors in the community and help the local economy thrive.

I would like to thank the gentleman from Maine (Mr. POLIQUIN) for addressing this issue, and our chairman on the